

HUNTINGTON
THEATRE
COMPANY

BY **MIKE LEW** DIRECTED BY
MORITZ VON STUELPNAGEL

WILD GLOBETROTTING COMEDY

TIGER STYLE!

CURRICULUM GUIDE

老虎
风格!



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COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

STANDARDS: Student Matinee performances and pre-show workshops provide unique opportunities for experiential learning and support various combinations of the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts. They may also support standards in other subject areas such as Social Studies and History, depending on the individual play's subject matter.

Activities are also included in this Curriculum Guide and in our pre-show workshops that support several of the Massachusetts state standards in Theatre. Other arts areas may also be addressed depending on the individual play's subject matter.

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details 1

- **Grade 8:** Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **Grades 9-10:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **Grades 11-12:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences from the text, including where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details 2

- **Grade 8:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **Grades 9-10:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **Grades 11-12:** Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details 3

- **Grade 8:** Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze how complex characters (e.g. those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the themes.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop related elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

Reading Literature: Craft and Structure 5

- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks), create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

Reading Literature: Craft and Structure 6

- **Grade 8:** Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze a case in which grasping point of view required distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7

- **Grade 8:** Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g. recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist).

MASSACHUSETTS STANDARDS IN THEATRE

ACTING

- **1.7:** Create and sustain a believable character throughout a scripted or improvised scene **(By the end of Grade 8)**.
- **1.12:** Describe and analyze, in written and oral form, characters' wants, needs, objectives, and personality characteristics **(By the end of Grade 8)**.
- **1.13:** In rehearsal and performance situations, perform as a productive and responsible member of an acting ensemble (i.e., demonstrate personal responsibility and commitment to a collaborative process) **(By the end of Grade 8)**.
- **1.14:** Create complex and believable characters through the integration of physical, vocal, and emotional choices **(Grades 9-12)**.
- **1.15:** Demonstrate an understanding of a dramatic work by developing a character analysis **(Grades 9-12)**.
- **1.17:** Demonstrate increased ability to work effectively alone and collaboratively with a partner or in an ensemble **(Grades 9-12)**.

READING AND WRITING SCRIPTS

- **2.7:** Read plays and stories from a variety of cultures and historical periods and identify the characters, setting, plot, theme, and conflict **(By the end of Grade 8)**.
- **2.8:** Improvise characters, dialogue, and actions that focus on the development and resolution of dramatic conflicts **(By the end of Grade 8)**.

- **2.11:** Read plays from a variety of genres and styles; compare and contrast the structure of plays to the structures of other forms of literature **(Grades 9-12)**.

TECHNICAL THEATRE

- **4.6:** Draw renderings, floor plans, and/or build models of sets for a dramatic work and explain choices in using visual elements (line, shape/form, texture, color, space) and visual principals (unity, variety, harmony, balance, rhythm) **(By the end of Grade 8)**.
- **4.13:** Conduct research to inform the design of sets, costumes, sound, and lighting for a dramatic production **(Grades 9-12)**.

CONNECTIONS

- **Strand 6: Purposes and Meanings in the Arts** — Students will describe the purposes for which works of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and architecture were and are created, and, when appropriate, interpret their meanings **(Grades PreK-12)**.
- **Strand 10: Interdisciplinary Connections** — Students will apply their knowledge of the arts to the study of English language arts, foreign languages, health, history and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering **(Grades PreK-12)**.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Attending live theatre is a unique experience with many valuable educational and social benefits. To ensure that all audience members are able to enjoy the performance, please take a few minutes to discuss the following audience etiquette topics with your students before you come to the Huntington Theatre Company.

- How is attending the theatre similar to and different from going to the movies? What behaviors are and are not appropriate when seeing a play? Why?
- Remind students that because the performance is live, the audience's behavior and reactions will affect the actors' performances. No two audiences are exactly the same, and therefore no two performances are exactly the same — this is part of what makes theatre so special! Students' behavior should reflect the level of performance they wish to see.
- Theatre should be an enjoyable experience for the audience. It is absolutely all right to applaud when appropriate and laugh at the funny moments. Talking and calling out during the performance, however, are not allowed. Why might this be? Be sure to mention that not only would the people seated around them be able to hear their conversation, but the actors on stage could hear them, too. Theatres are constructed to carry sound efficiently!
- Any noise or light can be a distraction, so please remind students to make sure their cell phones are turned off (or better yet, left at home or at school!). Texting, photography, and video recording are prohibited. Food, gum, and drinks should not be brought into the theatre.
- Students should sit with their group as seated by the Front of House staff and should not leave their seats once the performance has begun.

MIKE LEW AND MORITZ VON STUELPNAGEL: ARTISTS IN COLLABORATION

Playwright Mike Lew, trained at both Juilliard and Yale, certainly has the pedigree on which to build a successful career in any field, but with a passion for playwriting and a vision to share, Lew's work has brought a unique humor and perspective to the American theatre, bucking conventional narratives and breaking down stereotypes with each new work. Much of his recent success has included his frequent artistic collaborators, including director Moritz von Stuelpnagel who directs *Tiger Style!* at the Huntington Theatre Company in the 2016-2017 season.

Lew is a collaborator in every sense of the world. He is a founding member of the Ma-Yi Writers Lab, the world's largest assembly of Asian American playwrights working today. Nationally recognized playwrights A. Rey Pamatmat (whose play *after all the terrible things I do* was produced at the Huntington in 2015), Mia Chung, and Lew's wife, Rhana Lew Mirza, are also members of the group. According to its website, the group

is a professional peer-based workshop in permanent residence with the Obie and Drama Desk Award-winning Ma-Yi Theater Company, designed to nurture and showcase Asian American playwrights in New York City . . . The Lab is a community resource, braintrust, and place of artistic growth for its members. In many cases the Lab is [the] writers' primary outlet — their home — the place where they first share a draft of a new play (regardless of whether the play has outside support), and the place where they continue refining work until it's production-ready. The Lab has also become Ma-Yi's primary resource for production material, and in many cases work that begins in the Lab has gone on to production within Ma-Yi as well as at major theatres in NYC and nationally.

Director Moritz von Stuelpnagel, a Boston University graduate, is not new to the Huntington Theatre Company. Early in his career, he worked as an assistant director on the Huntington's productions of *Amphitryon*, *A Fair Country*, and *King Hedley II*. He has helmed productions at regional theatres across the country and received a 2016 Tony Award nomination for Best Direction of a Play for *Hand to God*. Von Stuelpnagel met Mike Lew when the two were interns at Playwrights Horizons in New York City. The two friends quickly found that they also made strong creative collaborators, and von Stuelpnagel has directed a number of Lew's plays including *Teenage Dick*, *Bike America*, *The Building Party*, and *The Roosevelt Cousins Thoroughly Sauced*. Of Lew's writing, von Stuelpnagel has said, "[Mike's work] shares with me a great mix of high-brow and low-brow . . . Some of the humor is incredibly stupid — disarmingly so — and yet he offers a provocative point of view that's really jolting."

Von Stuelpnagel's parents emigrated to the United States from Germany in 1975. Although he does not share Lew's Asian heritage, von Stuelpnagel immediately connected with *Tiger Style!* as a



Playwright Mike Lew and director Moritz von Stuelpnagel

child of immigrant parents. As Lew explains, *Tiger Style!* is "meant to be something that anybody who is assimilating to America over generations can relate to." Fortunately for both Lew and von Stuelpnagel, their theatrical careers have intertwined and together they promote each other's work and celebrate their mutual successes. They have both benefitted from the artistic collaborative process which they are now bringing to the Huntington. Lew remarked, "I've been dying to work at the Huntington for years. I keep falling in love with the plays that originate there, and it's with the Huntington's spirit of bold new work in mind that I'm delighted to share *Tiger Style!* This is a deeply personal play about my Chinese-American upbringing that wrestles with 'Asian tiger parenting,' Ivy League burnout, and the line between the cultural baggage we carry within us versus the cultural preconceptions heaped upon us. I can't wait to share it with Boston!"

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you agree with the idea that theatre is the most collaborative art form? Why or why not?
2. What are the benefits for artists who belong to a collaborative group like the Ma-Yi Writers Lab? How do artistic collectives support each other's artistic growth?
3. a. Research other collaborations between Mike Lew and Moritz von Stuelpnagel, such as the Alliance Theatre's production of *Tiger Style!*, *Teenage Dick* at the Public Theater, *Bike America* at Ma-Yi Theater Company, and *The Building Party* and *The Roosevelt Cousins Thoroughly Sauced*, both at the Ensemble Studio Theatre. How were these projects received by audiences and critics?
- b. How do long-term collaborations, like the one between Mike Lew and Moritz von Stuelpnagel, help artists create their best work?

THEMES FOR WRITING & DISCUSSION

STEREOTYPES

Hardworking overachievers who excel in the medical professions. Men who are emotionally withdrawn and incommunicative. Women who are submissive and overly polite. These are just a few of the stereotypes of Asian Americans that permeate American culture. In Mike Lew's *Tiger Style!*, siblings Albert and Jennifer Chen grapple with the expectations they experience in connection with their Chinese heritage and the implications of their race on their interactions with others. "One older sister — overachieving doctor. One younger brother — smart but lazy software engineer who pulls in a respectable seventy thou." In Albert's basic description of himself and Jennifer in Act I, Scene 1, he reduces their multi-dimensional lives and personalities into the most simplistic, stereotypical terms. "You're one of those low self-esteem Asians who substitutes professional growth for personal growth," Albert tells his sister. "Well you — *you're* just one of those pushover Asians who can't stand up for yourself so you go home and yell at your family," Jennifer fires back. (I, 4)

Albert and Jennifer's use of Asian American stereotypes to needle each other is tongue-in-cheek, but they take those stereotypes quite serious in their interactions with others. "Just because you know my race doesn't mean you know *me*," Albert reflects with dismay after a Chinese man named Tzi Chuan approaches him in a park with a series of questions and forgone conclusions about Albert's ethnic identity. "It doesn't mean you get to project your racial assumptions on me." (I, 1) Meanwhile, Jennifer takes enthusiastic pride in embodying the stereotype of a high-achieving Asian-American woman. "I graduated Harvard in *three years*," she brags in Scene 2 as she tries to persuade her boyfriend, Reggie, not to break up with her. "I was the first MD/PhD ever to sell out a concert at Carnegie Hall. When I started pulling 18-hour shifts at the hospital my first thought was *finally some down time* . . . I'm a clinical oncologist with a perfect survival rate and perfect dentistry. I'm patently awesome!" Jennifer's resume fails to win Reggie over, but that does not stop Albert from attempting a similar strategy at work. When Albert's slacker colleague, Russ, receives a promotion over him, Albert tries to use Asian stereotypes to his advantage as he argues his case with their boss, Melvin. When Melvin states that Albert has poor communication skills, Albert uses his cultural heritage as a defense. "Chinese people don't talk much," he claims. "Actions speak louder than words." (I, 3) When Melvin claims there is a lack of evidence of Albert's contributions to his team's projects, Albert tries to use his and Melvin's shared ancestry to get Melvin on his side. "You're supposed to see through the braggish bullshit . . . You know Chinese people don't brag!" Albert begs. "Come on, man. You're Asian . . . It means we're sposed to like, look out for each other." (I, 3) Melvin is not amused. "Don't project your racial assumptions on me," he scolds. (I, 3)

With Jennifer's love life and Albert's career both imploding, the siblings search for places to lay blame and land firmly on Asian stereotypes. Jennifer attributes her poor relationship choices on advice from her mother that reinforced the expectation of female passivity: "Mom always said that a daughter shouldn't make waves,



Francis Jue and Emily Kuroda in the Alliance Theatre's production of *Tiger Style!*

so I felt like I had to make do with the man that I had," she explains (Scene 4). Albert cites "the Eastern values of stoicism [and] equanimity" for inadvertently masking his frustration with his work situation. "It's a Zen thing. Whenever I feel myself getting angry I just swallow. And whatever leftover anger there is can spill out, but that's not nearly as much anger as I started out with." (I, 4)

As the play continues, the siblings struggle how to navigate the cultural stereotypes that influence others' expectations. When they try to use more stereotypically Western communication styles, they fail to make significant headway, so they try the opposite approach of going "Full Eastern" with their self-proclaimed "Asian Freedom Tour." (I, 7) They hope that if they travel to China and embrace and embody traditional Eastern cultural values, perhaps they will be able to function more effectively in their lives. But when events in China do not go quite as planned, Albert and Jennifer begin to think that maybe they have been wasting their time. After all, Albert observes, "in America you're s'posed to just *complain* about shit. You're not supposed to actually *do* something. Posturing is the American way." (II, 3) Why should Albert and Jennifer work so hard to defy expectations when others are just going to stereotype them anyway? As the airport Customs Guy in the play's final scene explains, his "job is to make quick judgements about who's American and who's not, so if you want to be in this country . . . you [should] make your story as easy" as possible. (II, 5)

QUESTIONS:

1. A stereotype is a simplified or standardized conception of the identity of a group of people. In Act I, Scene 7, Albert jockeys for seniority at work by attempting to exploit American stereotypes in his favor. "I wanted to go Full Western but they wouldn't let me," he tells Jennifer. "They keep wanting to turn me into a trope."

- a. Albert is offended when others apply Asian stereotypes to him. Is it hypocritical for him to embrace Western stereotypes when it is potentially to his benefit? What about Eastern stereotypes?
 - b. When he is fired from his job, Albert comments that if he cannot find a new one he will turn into “the little old Asian lady who’s so hardcore into recycling she digs for cans in the trash.” Is this joke offensive? Would it be ok for a non-Asian person to make this joke about Albert? Why or why not?
2. The opening stage directions of Act II, Scene 2 read: “*Montage scenes of fun times in China. Have fun! Don’t be racist!*” What is playwright Mike Lew saying about the way stereotypes are sometimes used in storytelling?
 3. In Act II, Scene 2, Cousin Chen gives Albert and Jennifer a bag of oranges, explaining that it is a traditional gift. When Albert and Jennifer are unfamiliar with this tradition, Cousin Chen refers to them as “whitewashed” and claims that they are not really Chinese. What does this comment mean? Why is this comment offensive?
 4. In Act II, Scene 3, Albert and General Tso, his boss at the Chinese government’s internet hacking operation, struggle in their working relationship due to their stereotypical expectations of each other’s respective Western and Eastern communication styles. What faults does General Tso find in the way Albert describes his hacking experience? What adjustments does Albert make in an attempt to satisfy General Tso? Is he successful? Why or why not?

COMING OF AGE, OR, ADULTING IS HARD

The top definition for the term *adulthood* on the slang definition website UrbanDictionary.com reads: “(v) to do grown up things and hold responsibilities such as, a 9-5 job, a mortgage/rent, a car payment, or anything else that makes one think of grownups.” While there may be general agreement about what “adulthood” looks like, that does not mean it’s easy to pull off, as siblings Albert and Jennifer Chen discover in *Tiger Style!* “It’s during tough times [that] I hear Mom and Dad’s comforting words,” Albert reflects. “What were they? Oh that’s right. ‘Suck it up.’” (I, 4) Albert and Jennifer are full-grown adults with careers, relationships, and responsibilities, but they still struggle with making it all work. Realizing that they cannot expect their parents to fix their problems for them, the siblings struggle to apply important lessons from their upbringing. Should they continue to live according to their parents’ advice? Is that advice even relevant in Albert and Jennifer’s modern lives? As they come of age, Albert and Jennifer can only be certain of one thing: Adulthood is hard!

After Jennifer’s boyfriend, Reggie, breaks up with her, Albert tries to be a supportive brother by commenting that “Reggie was objectively *TURRIBLE*” and that Jennifer is “100 times better than Reggie,” but Jennifer cannot help but be disappointed in her inability to maintain a romantic relationship. “What’s there to talk about?” she complains. “I’m a failure.” (I, 4) Albert, however, is also certain he is failing in his adult life. His career is going nowhere and he cannot seem to get ahead. “My efforts should speak for themselves,” he explains. “That’s what Dad taught us. Dad always said that the cream will rise to the top.” (I, 4) But



Ruibo Quan and Jon Norman Schneider in the Alliance Theatre’s production of *Tiger Style!*



Francis Jue, Jon Norman Schneider, and Ruibo Quan in the Alliance Theatre's production of *Tiger Style!*

Albert's life simply is not working out that way. Both he and Jennifer seek their parents out, blaming them for not preparing them to cope with these challenges. "Yelling at our parents is the only way we can shed our old hang-ups and move on to be full-grown adults," Albert determines. "This is what everyone else does." (I, 4)

When their parents are unsympathetic, Jennifer is despondent and unwilling to face the harsh realities that can come along with "adulthood." "It's so hard navigating this life," she complains. "Couldn't just a *little* emotional support and understanding be warranted here instead of continued hard-assery?" (I, 5) She and Albert's parents are unmoved. Dad recounts the challenges and risks his family faced to come to the United States and Mom reminds the family that she "had to work two waitressing jobs to put [herself] through UCLA." (I, 5) They reason that if they managed to be fully-functioning adults under significantly more difficult circumstances, Albert and Jennifer should be able to do just fine.

Jennifer tries to take new steps into adulthood by trying online dating in hopes of rebounding from her breakup but Albert points out that her profile reads more like a resume. "Dag yo! Dating is hard," Jennifer objects. "It's really hard for me to brag about myself outside of my work life. Without it I don't know who I am." (I, 6) She decides she needs therapy to bring her adult reality in alignment with her adult life plan. Meanwhile, Albert determines that he will take control of his career and demand the promotion he believes he deserves. He rejects perceptions of his youth and asserts himself as the adult he wants to be, reminding his colleague, Russ: "I am not your little brother. I'm older than you, I've been here longer than you, and I'm smarter than you . . . I may be cute as a button but inside me there is a very grizzled very angry adult." (I, 7)

When the siblings embark on their self-described "Asian Freedom Tour," they expect that their travels in their ancestral homeland will help them discover the best way to navigate through their adult

lives. But while Jennifer and Albert find the seemingly limitless life choices in American society overwhelming, the strictly prescribed social roles for adults of their class in China are equally frustrating. Jennifer's Chinese matchmaker is unconcerned with what Jennifer wants and needs out of a relationship in order to be happy; Albert's Chinese government job expects too much of him whereas his American one expected too little. How do the siblings respond? What adult skills do they need to draw on the most? "Dude," Albert says. "Suck it up." (II, 1)

QUESTIONS:

1. In Act I, Scene 7, Jennifer's therapist chides her for her insistence that she stick with an elaborate life plan that is making her miserable. Is the therapist right? Would Jennifer be happier if she followed her therapist's advice of giving herself a break? Why or why not?
2. Do you have detailed plans and goals for your future or do you prefer to let life play out and happen however it will? How will you feel if you do not accomplish the goals you have currently set for yourself?
3. What do you think Albert and Jennifer were like as teenagers? What personality traits and behaviors do they exhibit as adults in *Tiger Style!* that may have changed or stayed the same as they grew older? Use specific evidence from the text to support your analysis.
4. How do you expect your life will evolve as you get older? What advice do the adults in your life give you about how to handle the increasing responsibilities that come with growing up? Who has it harder: Adults or teenagers?

READY FOR THE REAL WORLD: PARENTAL NURTURING OR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY?

If Albert and Jennifer's parents are abusive in their demands or in actions, it does not show in their conversations with their children. It seems instead that parenting, now that their children are grown up, is a largely hands-off activity. Their parents clearly love them, but both Albert and Jennifer insist on blaming their extreme upbringing for every failure in their lives, from being treated like a "doormat" to lack of wedding rings. Albert quips, "All that college prep. All that SAT prep. Mom and Dad were tyrants. And for what?" What angers Albert is that despite all of his hard work he is not successful in adulthood because his parents forced him to study the wrong things. Or at least that's what he believes. Albert remarks, "you didn't give us the preparation we needed to face the world! Don't you think you owe us an apology? You really put the screws to us. We basically had no childhood." (I, 5)

Albert's struggles come back to a belief that hard work, intelligence, and an ability to out-perform his co-workers should be enough to secure his career and his future. He laments, "my efforts should speak for themselves. That's what dad taught us. The cream will rise to the top." (I, 4) Of course, the reality is

quite different in a corporate environment and Albert learns that being the hardest working or most competent does not insulate a person from being fired. Albert's slacker coworker, "Russ the Bus," enjoys much more success because he is self-promotional, outgoing, and has made a solid impression on his boss, Melvin. Russ' promotion disrupts Albert's most fundamental view of the world as a meritocracy — a worldview learned from his parents.

Jennifer's career path is on track but the rest of her life plan has gone wildly off course. She cannot find a suitable boyfriend and her own timetable for starting a family is in jeopardy. She concedes that she has low self-esteem but firmly believes this problem is a result of a parenting mistake; her parents placed too much emphasis on her academic and professional achievements, as opposed to encouraging her personal growth. Jennifer believes her parents are at fault for her own lack of maturity and does not hold herself accountable for her own choices, instead stridently blaming her parents for a failed relationship with a person they have never even met. Albert, fueling this fire, complains, "why did you train us to be so deferential if it means that Jennifer let her dumb boyfriend treat her like a doormat?" (I, 5)

To their credit, Albert and Jennifer's parents worked very hard to give them a suitable upbringing. They lived in an upscale community, secured the best possible academic and musical training for their children, and made sure they were on a positive career track. Their "nurturing" was the best they could provide. Upon hearing their children's complaints and failures as parents, Dad counters, "So our old world values failed you. So sue us." (I, 5)

Once out in the "real world," Albert and Jennifer seem to lack the perspective necessary to actually fix their problems. Their natural intelligence and long list of achievements make communicating with others, whom they perceive as less impressive, very difficult. Jennifer is unable to get through a counseling session without complaining about her therapist's lack of credentials. Albert attempts to improve his work situation by confronting his boss, but it proves to be too little too late because he never cultivated a relationship with Melvin or created an explicit record of his accomplishments. Without making any real progress in their daily lives, Albert and Jennifer decide to radically change their cultural backdrop in order to solve their problems. Unfortunately, the "Asian Freedom Tour" results in more problems in a new place; and they find themselves relying on a distantly related family member to get them out of trouble. It is not until they land in a Chinese prison that they start to positively reflect upon their



Emily Kuroda and Ruibo Quan in the Alliance Theatre's production of *Tiger Style!*

childhood. Jennifer remarks, "And yet all of that training's still in us...it means something, I think. These gifts from our parents, arduous as they were to attain." (II, 4)

At the end of the play, Albert and Jennifer's parents arrive at the airport to pick them up just in time to hear Jennifer admit: "I'm someone whose family has sacrificed a great deal to get us here. And maybe we ought to be thankful for that," which of course greatly pleases her parents (II, 5). Their parents explain that, while they were able to track their children's every movement with the microchips they implanted in Albert and Jennifer as babies, they felt it was important for their children to work out their problems on their own. While nothing is solved by the time Albert and Jennifer make it through customs, it appears that their perspective of the world and of themselves in it is a little bit broader.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do Albert and Jennifer have a "right" to be angry at their parents for how they were raised? Was it helpful for them to confront their parents about what they believe was lacking in their childhoods?
2. Instead of blaming their parents for the things that have gone wrong in their adult lives, what action or frame of mind could these characters adopt in order to improve their situations?
3. Which is more important to adult success: upbringing or personal desire and motivation to succeed? In what circumstances, if any, do you think parents' failures can negatively impact a person's adult life?

MASTERY ASSESSMENT

ACT I

SCENE 1

1. What does the play's title, *Tiger Style!*, refer to? Is this title appropriate for the play? Why or why not?
2. Describe the play's setting.
3. What is the first thing the audience hears as the lights come up?
4. Who starts a conversation with Albert? What does this person want to know?
5. What is Albert doing in the park? What is his job title?
6. After interrogation by both Tzi Chuan and Russ the Bus, what ethnicity does Albert claim?
7. What nickname does Russ the Bus give to Albert? How does Albert feel about it?
8. How does Russ the Bus tease Albert about his work output?
9. Do you think Russ the Bus is able to understand Albert's frustration with what he calls "racial profiling?" Provide evidence from the text to support your answer.

SCENE 2

10. Why is Jennifer upset?
11. What is Reggie's explanation for his behavior? Why is he frustrated with Jennifer?
12. Who also lives in the house besides Jennifer and Reggie?
13. Describe Reggie's occupation. What is an important part of his "lifestyle"?
14. Why is Jennifer having difficulty understanding Reggie's decision?
15. Why have things changed for Reggie? Ultimately, in his view, what is the problem with his and Jennifer's relationship?
16. At the conclusion of their argument, how does Jennifer "get the last word?"

SCENE 3

17. For what company does Albert work?
18. Who is Albert meeting with and what has this person come to tell him?
19. What rationale does Albert use to justify his anger about Russ the Bus' move in the department?
20. Why does Melvin become frustrated by Albert's behavior? How does he respond to Albert's claim of unfair treatment?
21. How does Russ the Bus feel about the news?

SCENE 4

22. How does Albert find Jennifer when he returns home?
23. Who does Jennifer blame for her life's failures? How is she failing?

24. Who does Albert blame for his life's failures? How is he failing?
25. What health problem does Albert think he has developed?
26. What plan do the siblings hatch to help fix their situation?

SCENE 5

27. What items does Albert bring to his parents' home to illustrate his point?
28. How does Albert's father respond to the news that Albert got passed over for a promotion?
29. How does Jennifer's mother respond when she hears about her daughter's ex-live-in-boyfriend of two years?
30. Do the parents apologize? Who, according to them, is to blame for their children's failures?

SCENE 6

31. Were Albert and Jennifer satisfied with their visit to their parents' home?
32. What is Albert going to do to change his life?
33. What is Jennifer's strategy for making improvements?

SCENE 7

34. How does Jennifer interact with her new therapist? What advice does the therapist offer?
35. What does Albert demand from Russ the Bus?
36. Why does it matter to Jennifer that her therapist has secured a Ph.D. but not an M.D.?
37. What behaviors do Albert and Melvin exhibit that upset Russ the Bus?
38. According to Jennifer, what is the single most important trait defining a person's value?
39. Why is Melvin's statement "go back where you came from" ironic?
40. How does Albert exact his revenge on Melvin?

ACT II

SCENE 1

1. To where do Albert and Jennifer travel?
2. Why does Jennifer disagree with the comment that their journey mirrors the "back to Africa movement"?
3. Whose counsel does Jennifer think they should seek? Does Albert agree?
4. What did Jennifer give up in order to make this trip happen?
5. What happens to Albert and Jennifer's money and passports?
6. From where does Albert know Tzi Chuan? What is he doing in China?

7. How does Tzi Chuan help Albert? Does Jennifer think it worked?
8. What career offers does Tzi Chuan make? Why does he think China is a good place for Albert and Jennifer?

SCENE 2

9. Are Albert and Jennifer happy with their shopping experience? What did they buy and do they think they got a good “value”?
10. How is Cousin Chen related to Albert and Jennifer? What gift does she bring them?
11. What warning does Cousin Chen give to Albert and Jennifer?

SCENE 3

12. Explain the “matchmaking” process Jennifer requests.
13. How does Albert seek revenge on the Russ the Bus?
14. Does Jennifer ultimately want to get married?
15. Is Albert successful in his first day at work? In what moral conundrum does he find himself?

SCENE 4

16. What do Albert and Jennifer need to do in order to be released from jail? Are they successful?
17. How does Tzi Chuan decide to further punish Albert and Jennifer?
18. What great sacrifice does Cousin Chen make?

SCENE 5

19. According to the customs agent, what do Albert and Jennifer’s passports say about them? Why does this information cause confusion?
20. Why does Albert call Jennifer a “sell-out”?
21. Who meets Albert and Jennifer at the airport?
22. Does the play’s ending give closure to the story? Why or why not?

RELATED WORKS & RESOURCES



PLAYS BY MIKE LEW

- *Teenage Dick*
- *Bury the Iron Horse*
- *Collin*
- *Paper Gods*
- *Bike America*
- *Yit, Ngay (One, Two)*
- *microcrisis*
- *Three Men of Golgotha*
- *People’s Park*

ARTICLES BY MIKE LEW

- Untitled piece for the Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts: inclusioninthearts.org/projects/national-diversity-forum/opinion-pieces/michael-lew/
- “I’ll Disband My Roving Gang of Thirty Asian Playwrights When You Stop Doing Asian Plays in Yellow Face* (*Exception: David Henry Hwang’s play *Yellow Face*),” *HowlRound*, October 6, 2014: howlround.com/i-ll-disband-my-roving-gang-of-thirty-asian-playwrights-when-you-stop-doing-asian-plays-in-yellow
- “Going Digital: How Should We Publish & License New Plays In An Online World?” *HowlRound*, July 17, 2014: howlround.com/going-digital-how-should-we-publish-license-new-plays-in-an-online-world

INTERVIEWS WITH MIKE LEW

- “Interview With a Playwright: Mike Lew,” Playwrights Foundation, February 3, 2015: playwrightsfoundation.blogspot.com/2015/02/interview-with-playwright-mike-lew.html
- “Mike Lew’s Rattled Hymn of a Tiger Cub,” *American Theatre*, September 2015: americantheatre.org/2015/09/23/mike-lews-rattled-hymn-of-a-tiger-cub/

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* by Amy Chua
- *Everything I Never Told You* by Celeste Ng
- “Chinese-American Cartoonist Forces us to Face Racist Stereotypes” PBS NEWSHOUR: pbs.org/newshour/art/this-chinese-american-cartoonist-forces-us-to-face-racist-stereotypes
- “How Wellesley Plans to Address the Mental Health of its Asian-American Students”: wbur.org/edify/2016/09/12/wellesley-asian-american-suicide-intervention

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

WU-TANG CLAN AND *TIGER STYLE!*

“The Wu is the way, the Tang is the slang, the Clan is the fam.”

In the darkness we hear the opening licks to “Wu-Tang Clan Ain’t Nuthin Ta F’ Wit” — the part with the chant that goes, “Tiger Style! Tiger Style!” — Opening stage directions to Mike Lew’s Tiger Style!

The rap group Wu-Tang Clan originated in New York City and produced one of the most important albums in hip hop history, *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)*. It is widely considered the most influential musical group of the “hip hop golden age,” which began in the late 1980s and lasted until the early 1990s. The song “Wu-Tang Clan Ain’t Nuthin Ta F’ Wit” was produced by RZA and released in 1993, along with the rest of the group’s debut studio album. Some critics have postulated that RZA is a Taoist, subscribing to ancient Chinese philosophy and religious beliefs which emphasize living in harmony and accordance to the natural flow of the universe. The Wu-Tang Clan was heavily influenced by Asian and Middle Eastern customs and cultures and, empowered by this knowledge, produced work emphasizing their strength as individuals and as a musical group. According to the “Wu Bible” (a glossary conceived by the Wu-Tang Clan enthusiast, Martin Lenngren) “Tiger Style” is “a hard external style that meets force with force. Its primary hand weapons are the closed fist and the tiger claw while the kicking maneuvers are usually low to middle range kicks of extreme power. The key to the style is the strong counter attacks.” RZA’s knowledge of Kung Fu and Kung Fu films is apparent in many of the album’s tracks and the terminology used in groups’ lyrics offers insights into their philosophies and interests.

QUESTIONS:

1. Continue your research of the Wu-Tang Clan and the song used in the play *Tiger Style!* Why do you think Mike Lew used this lyrical reference as the title of his play?
2. In the play, what does “tiger style” refer to? Does it have multiple meanings within the context of this story?
3. How does the mission of the Wu-Tang Clan relate to the major themes of Lew’s play, if at all?
4. Do you think this music (and the play for that matter) is appropriate for all ages?

MILLENNIAL IDENTITY

Roughly defined as those born between 1982 and the early 2000s, the Millennial generation has received significant media attention in recent years for being . . . well . . . the worst. A May 2013 *Time* magazine article dubbed them the “Me Me Me Generation,” describing them as “lazy, entitled narcissists who still live with their parents.” In December 2015, *The Washington Post* drew attention to how society’s negative perception of the generation is hindering the objectives of student protest movements, noting that young people’s efforts at social change are often interpreted by those in power (read: older Americans) as whining. *The New York Times*



Members of the rap group, Wu-Tang Clan

has published multiple think-pieces about the generation: Who are they? What do they want? And why, ask their baby boomer generation bosses, are they so annoying and entitled?

Albert and Jennifer Chen, the central characters in Mike Lew’s *Tiger Style!*, are Millennials on a mission to prove that they are capable of being self-sufficient humans living fulfilling adult lives, but they struggle in part, they claim, because their upbringing, so heavily focused on perfection and overachievement, gave them false expectations about the real world. Albert and Jennifer’s childhoods were marked by experiences familiar to many Millennials: Music lessons followed by hours of practice in pursuit of perfection. Parents who proof-read their papers for school to ensure high academic achievement. But despite their acclaimed concert performances at Carnegie Hall and degrees from Harvard University, are they able to fend for themselves when their parents are no longer there to push them forward? When they travel to China, Tzi Chuan sets Albert and Jennifer up with everything they need to have successful lives in their new country, but things still go wrong. “I gave you that chance. Gave you everything you asked for. And you’ve shown yourselves to be nothing more than squabbling infants,” Tzi Chuan berates them in Act II, Scene 4. It seems that Tzi Chuan’s characterization of *Tiger Style!*’s Millennial protagonists as “an embarrassment to this country, your ancestors, your family, and to all forms of hominid life” knows no national boundaries.

But is this characterization of Millennials fair? Is taking a lot of selfies evidence of inherent selfishness? For every article criticizing the generation, a new crop of pieces that defend and reinterpret Millennial behaviors has begun to emerge. *Time* may have dubbed them the “Me Me Me Generation,” but *The Atlantic* countered with “The Try-Hard Generation” in June 2015. While Baby Boomers look at Facebook profiles and Instagram feeds and see self-absorption, Millennials see modern tools for expressing their individuality. While traditionalists bemoan an era of political correctness, Millennials say



Time magazine's cover story on the Millennial generation

that they are simply more tolerant and respectful of difference than previous generations. While middle-aged college professors are dismayed by their students' lack of vision and creativity, Millennials point out that it is previous generations that are responsible for the emphasis on standardized testing in American education. And while workaholic Millennials like Jennifer in *Tiger Style!* may be known for shaming their vacation-taking colleagues, the

combination of a downturned economy, wage stagnation, and student loan debt has made many young workers believe they need to make themselves essential and irreplaceable in their workplace. Desperation to keep a good gig going, they say, has led to long hours in the office with little time off. Vacation is a luxury Millennials do not feel they can afford, which also contributes to their emphasis on pursuing personally meaningful, fulfilling careers, and penchant for workplace amenities — if they're going to spend a lot of time there, they reason, they want to enjoy themselves and feel good about what they're doing.

QUESTIONS:

1. When Albert and Jennifer are forced to play a sonata in an effort to secure their freedom from a Chinese prison, they draw on their years of classical piano and cello training. Though neither of them grew up to be professional musicians, their parents required them to take music lessons and develop a high level of skill in their respective instruments. The siblings look back on this time with some disdain, but their experience playing music as adults gives them new perspective. Albert observes in Act II, Scene 4: "Who knew it'd be fun when you're not being forced to do it four hours a day." What nonmusical skills might Albert and Jennifer have developed through their lessons? How do those attributes serve them as adults?
2. Can Albert and Jennifer be described as entitled, self-absorbed, or whiny? How do their perceptions of themselves differ from how others see them? Provide specific examples from the text to support your answers.
3. a. Millennials are generally defined as those born between 1982 and 2004. What is Gen Y and how does it overlap with the Millennial generation? What years encompass Gen X? The Baby Boomers? The Greatest Generation? What qualities and characteristics are associated with each group?
b. As a middle or high school student in the year 2016, you would likely be classified as a younger Millennial. Do you identify

as such? Why or why not? Do you feel you share common life experiences with people who were born in the 1980s and 1990s or is there too much time between your upbringing?

4. How have traditional rites of passage, such as marriage, home-ownership, and children, changed since the beginning of the 20th century? How do young people today know that they are adults? How have expectations around adult responsibilities evolved throughout the last century?
5. Is the criticism of Millennials by older generations unique? Or is it another example in an historical pattern of older generations criticizing younger ones?

"WHERE ARE YOU FROM?"

In the 2013 Comedy Week short film "What Kind of Asian Are You?" (which has over 8 million views on YouTube), two strangers meet while exercising on a beautiful California hiking trail. A white man, impressed by the Asian woman's "accent," asks her where she is from. When she replies that she was born in Orange County and is American, he believes that there has been some kind of miscommunication. Despite his inability to appropriately ask a question about her ethnicity, she politely tells him that her grandmother is Korean. At this moment, he launches into a description of everything he loves about Korean culture including the "teriyaki," and that he was pretty sure she was either Korean or Japanese, but he was definitely "leaning Korean." She immediately turns the conversation around and discovers that his grandparents were English. He describes himself as "plain old American," but in an effort to expose his largely ignorant line of questioning, she begins to speak in an English accent and make every possible English food reference she can think of, from "I love your people's fish and chips" to having a "spot of tea."

Albert could relate, of course, to this woman's plight. In the first scene of *Tiger Style!* he remarks, "my ethnicity is not a party game," because he routinely faces questions about it from almost everyone he meets. He laments that his ethnic heritage "IS boring. And yet somehow endlessly fascinating to everyone else, to the point that I'm either othered or smothered." (I, 1) Albert's "Asian Freedom Tour" is kicked off by troubles at work, and at the height of his conflict with his boss, Albert speaks out in disbelief: "Dude, you're Asian. How you gonna say 'go back where you came from' to someone else Asian?" (I, 7) By the time Albert and Jennifer escape from China and are arguing with the US customs official in the play's final scene, Albert has lost his patience. "But isn't our heritage infinitely fascinating? Don't you want to know where we are *really* from?" For Albert, he seems caught between two hard realities: he is questioned in the place of his birth but also in the place of his grandparents' birth. He tells his parents, "I am still majorly pissed off. We don't fit in in China, and we're denied entry here." (II, 5) Albert's family can offer little comfort to him as he struggles with the many injustices and racial biases he will continue to face. His mother concedes, "This is the slow crawl of generations of progress. By the time real social change rolls around we'll be dead." (II, 5)

QUESTIONS:

1. Watch either YouTube episode “What Kind of Asian Are You?” OR “If Asians Said the Stuff White People Say.” What is your initial impression of the video clip? Does it make you laugh, feel anger, or cause confusion?
2. Why do you think the producers of this video felt their message was important to share?
3. Why do you think many white Americans dismiss their own culture and ethnic heritage as just “plain old American”?
4. How would you appropriately ask someone about their ethnicity and cultural heritage?

AMY CHUA: PARENTING ACROSS CULTURES

While playwright Mike Lew insists that his play *Tiger Style!* is not a comment specifically on Chinese or Chinese-American parenting, he was inspired by Amy Chua’s controversial 2011 memoir, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. Her story, sometimes parody and always unfiltered, focuses on the successes and failures of her strict approach to parenting, passed down from her own mother and father. Chua claims that she did not write the book to offer advice or to serve as a model to other mothers; instead she penned the book during a crisis with her youngest daughter. Many readers, especially immigrants and children of immigrants from China, found the book upsetting, and claimed that Chua was misrepresenting their heritage and unfairly attributing her severe techniques to a cultural norm which simply doesn’t exist. Chua responded to the criticisms she received by saying, “My book has been controversial. Many people have misunderstood it. If I could push a magic button and choose either happiness or success for my children, I’d choose happiness in a second. But I don’t think it’s as simple as that; it can be a tough world out there, and true self-esteem has to be earned.” While Chua recognizes mistakes she made during her time raising daughters, she wouldn’t go back and alter her general philosophy. She concedes only that she would allow them to express more of their individuality. But with one daughter currently attending Harvard College and the other at Yale Law School, and both proving to be musical prodigies, it’s hard to argue with her parenting style with regard to the achievements and relative success of her children.

Lew, intrigued by the controversy surrounding Amy Chua’s memoir, desired to “provide a counter narrative” to the idea that Asian Americans are “just a bunch of robots that don’t care about [themselves]” and to dissect the theory of high achievement as a result of “tiger parenting.” Lew, raised by a nurturing mother and father who could be classified as “tiger parents,” reflected upon his upbringing in a 2015 interview with *American Theatre* magazine:

I don’t hate my parents and I didn’t commit suicide. But I was raised that way, and I was raised with those values . . . I think that some of the criticism is valid, but I think a lot of it is founded on xenophobia . . . and I think the expectations that Asian American writers, whose parents aren’t immigrants, would continue to throw up those narratives is not a realistic expectation.



Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother author Amy Chua

When questioned as to whether or not “tiger style” parenting works, Lew remarked:

I think it works but only up to a point. I think a big question of this play that remains open is: even if you do achieve all the things that your parents are badgering you into, there’s a lot of personal growth that has to happen after it ...The backlash against [*Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*], a lot of it, was about: you can’t subject your kids to this because they’ll break. So maybe some kids do break and some kids can’t conform to those expectations; for those [who] do conform, what then? I just think that if you’re not equipped to answer that, then you still have a lot of growth to do, whether or not you have those fancy degrees. Or what happens in your personal life if you don’t equate achievement with happiness?

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think it is better to be raised by permissive parents or strict ones?
2. Do you believe parenting heavily influences a child’s development or do you think “you are who you are”?
3. How would you measure “success” in parenting?
4. Do you think it’s fair that parents get credit or blame for their children’s behavior?
5. Read Sophia Chua-Rubinfeld’s letter, “Why I love my strict Chinese mother,” in response to the controversy following the publication of her mother’s popular book (nypost.com/2011/01/18/why-i-love-my-strict-chinese-mom/). Do you believe Chua’s own children were harmed or helped by her method of parenting?

“PARTY” CONTROL

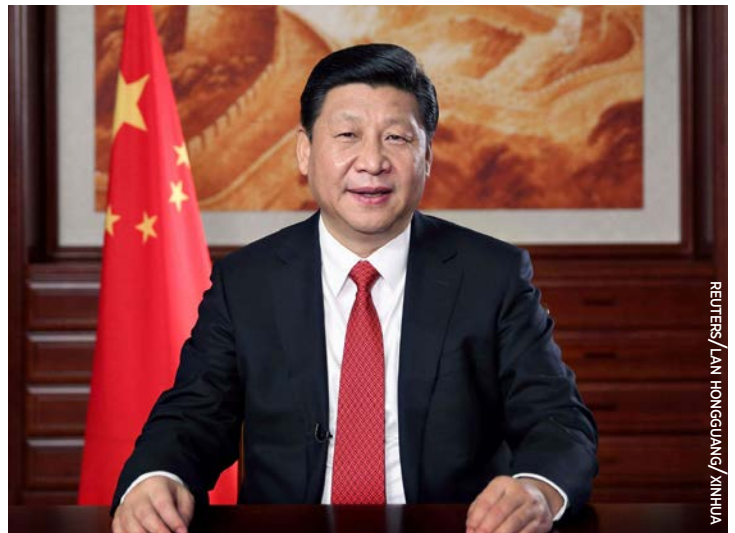
When Albert and Jennifer arrive in China in Act II of *Tiger Style!*, they are surprised to be greeted by Tzi Chuan, an elderly Chinese man who Albert previously met in a park back home. In that first meeting, Albert was disturbed by Tzi Chuan’s endless stream of personal questions, but in China, the secret truth behind the

interrogation is revealed. “The Party called me back here to acclimate you,” Tzi Chuan explains. “I am a Party official, you see . . . I know everything.” (II, 1) Tzi Chuan reveals that the government has secured jobs for Albert and Jennifer based on their perceived aptitude. “We care most about the utility of worker placement,” he explains. “The best for the job, in the best jobs, doing their best jobs.” (II, 1)

In *Tiger Style!*, Tzi Chuan’s role as a Party operative is played for comedic effect, but the play highlights some common criticisms of the Chinese government as a surveillance state with large wealth disparities and a history of human rights abuses. China has the world’s second-largest economy, making it an influential global power, with much of its activity coming from manufacturing. As of 2013, China’s population had reached 1.357 billion, with more than 82 million living below the poverty line according to China’s own statistics, though the number is closer to 150 million when international poverty standards were applied, according to the World Bank, an agency of the United Nations.

When Albert and Jennifer arrive in China in Act II of *Tiger Style!*, they land in the airport of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. China began creating Special Economic Zones, or SEZs, in 1980 to encourage and attract foreign investment. With unique laws and regulations around trade, the government believed that businesses would have incentive to start there, thus boosting the country’s overall international competitiveness. The SEZ in Shenzhen, a city on the southeast coast of China, was one of the first to be created and has grown into one of the most prominent manufacturing cities in the world. But human rights groups, such as Human Rights Watch, consider SEZs to be exploitative of workers. In *Tiger Style!*, Cousin Chen works 16-hour days at Foxconn, a real factory located in Shenzhen that manufactures products such as Apple’s iPad and iPhone, among other electronics. Foxconn has been at the center of many controversies connected with its working conditions, most notoriously an internationally publicized series of worker suicides from 2010-2012.

The Chinese government also operates its own media outlets, including television, radio, and newspapers, with the purpose of promoting positive images and stories about the Communist government. As global media moves increasingly online, the internet has also become a major hub of the Chinese government’s efforts to surveil its citizens and control what information they can access. As Cousin Cen describes in Act II, Scene 2, “the Party monitors everything. Don’t think you’re safe just because you’re American . . . If you’re in with the government, you can eat the best pork snout. But if you run afoul of the government, you will eat the *worst* pork snout.” In *Tiger Style!*, Albert’s job in China is at a government-run internet hacking operation where he is ordered to carry out cyber-attacks against Westerners. Beyond suspected responsibility for incidents of cyber warfare, the Chinese government maintains a



China’s President Xi Jinping

major presence online, monitoring, censoring, and propagating what websites, and therefore, what ideas, Chinese citizens can access. As the UK news outlet *The Independent* described in July 2016, social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter are blocked in the country by “a system of censorship known as the Great Firewall” while “China’s own social-media networks are closely policed to ensure public opinion does not coalesce into a threat to one-party rule.” Chinese activists who speak out against their government on the country’s own social media networks see their accounts frequently shut down, while others have found themselves threatened with “up to three years in jail for spreading rumors, if their posts were viewed more than 5,000 times or re-posted 500 times.”

QUESTIONS:

1. When Albert and Jennifer fail to impress Tzi Chuan with their sonata in Act II, he tells them they will be transferred from jail to a “re-education” camp, also sometimes referred to as a labor camp. Research the original purpose of these camps. How did their use in the Chinese penal system evolve? For what kinds of crimes were people sent to the camps? Do they still exist in China today? Has the United States ever operated “re-education” camps or something similar?
2. What efforts are being made to reform China’s state-sponsored media? How successful are these efforts? What challenges do reformers face?
3. In December 2012, Chinese President Xi Jinping instituted efforts to remove corrupt bureaucrats from government positions, resulting in the arrest of officials from all levels of public office. What evidence of wrong-doing is provided in these cases? How has the Chinese business community been affected? Journalists? Foreign executives and aid workers? How have Western governments responded?
4. Compare and contrast Chinese Communism with the Communist economic system of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

UTILITARIAN SCENIC DESIGN

Act I of *Tiger Style!* is set in various locations in Irvine, California in the United States, while Act II is set in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone in China. Mike Lew sets up parallels between the central characters' lives in America and in China, placing the play's action in similarly functioning locations in each act. The scenic designer for the Huntington Theatre Company's production of *Tiger Style!* will need to make design choices that allow the audience to make visual connections while also creating unique environments for the actors to perform in.

Analyze the text to determine which locations in the US mirror ones in China in how they serve the story, then do research on what these locations look like in reality. Choose parallel settings from Irvine and Shenzhen, and then create a base scenic design that can be used to portray each location. Next, decide on props and other set dressings like furniture, plants, textiles, and wall art that could be added or removed to differentiate the locations. Use original drawings, magazine clippings, and/or printouts of images from online to create your design.

CHILDHOOD CIRCLE SCENES

In *Tiger Style!*, Albert and Jennifer confront their parents about the ways their upbringing influences their lives as adults, and reference bits of advice that their parents frequently imparted. In this improvisational exercise, students will create short scenes based on their experiences with an adult who takes care of them. As a full class, stand in a circle with everyone facing outwards. The instructor stands in the center and coaches students through the following steps:

- Close your eyes and think about your household, where you live, and who is responsible for you, whether it be mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, aunt, brother, whoever. Think of what is the one thing they say most to you when you are at home. There's probably one statement or line that you hear over and over again.
- Think of that line and then turn back to the center of the circle.
- Imagine that I am you and you are that person who is responsible for you. Whatever the line is, everyone should look directly at me and say the line with as much emotion as you possibly can. All together — 1, 2, 3, GO!
 - Teachers: Repeat this step several times, adding energy and emotion as the group grows more comfortable.
- Now add a gesture. Think of how the person looks when they say this line. Arms raised, fists up, pointing, throwing a hand up, tapping their foot — what does the person DO when they say these words?
- Say the lines again, just as before, but now adding a gesture. All together — 1, 2, 3, GO!
 - Teachers: Repeat this step several times as before, but instruct students to modify volume and size of the gesture — try it as a whisper and a miniature version of the gesture, end with it being loud with a huge gesture.
- Keep it that loud and that big, but this time we will each perform for the group.
 - Go around the circle and each student performs their line/gesture combination one at a time.
- The next step is improvisational acting.
 - Ask for two volunteers — Partner A will stay in place in the circle, while B will stand in the center. Partner A will perform the line they have just been practicing, in the character of the real person who says it. Partner B will respond as a child or young person hearing that line. Ask: How would you react to hearing those words and seeing that gesture? There is no right or wrong answer. Partner A can then respond as their character would respond.
 - Repeat with more pairs until everyone has said their line to someone else.
- Reflect: How did it feel to stand in the shoes of an adult in your life? Was it easy or difficult to come up with additional things that they would say? How did your partner respond to hearing your opening line? Compare and contrast that response with your own response to hearing those words. Is there something that you can learn or take away from taking on the adult's perspective or from seeing a new take on a prompt that you hear all the time?
- Extension: Using the improvisation in the previous activity as a starting point, write a dialogue between yourself and the adult in your life.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



Margaret Cho



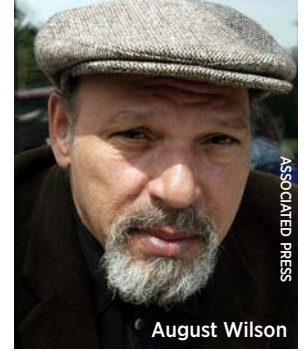
Ira Glass



Eminem



Bonnie and Clyde



August Wilson

MATCHING GAME — POP CULTURE STYLE!

In order to fully understand any piece of art, it is important to place the work in its appropriate context, including but not limited to the place, time, and culture. A dramaturg may be secured by a theatre company to complete research around the “world of the play” in an effort to help directors, designers, and actors produce the piece and understand the intentions of the playwright. Many of the references in *Tiger Style!* date back to the 1990s or earlier, decades which today’s middle and high school students missed! If you are unfamiliar with a person, song, place, etc. it is a critical part of being an engaged audience member to do the work and place the reference appropriately. IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT YOU WILL MISS THE JOKE!

Match the references, left column, below with their corresponding descriptions on the right. Use all available resources to complete the activity.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| A. Amy Tan | 1. Two stringed musical instrument |
| B. Ira Glass | 2. American actor popular in the 1930s and 40s |
| C. Bonnaroo | 3. Play on the name of Chinese General Shek |
| D. Wu-Tang Clan | 4. American DJ/record producer, associate of Dr. Dre |
| E. Carnegie Hall | 5. Criminal duo famous during the Great Depression |
| F. Margaret Cho | 6. 5 th president of Iraq, executed after US invasion |
| G. Eminem | 7. Secret State Police of Nazi Germany |
| H. University of Phoenix | 8. Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright |
| I. Shenzhen Special Economic Zone | 9. Writer who is best known for <i>The Joy Luck Club</i> |
| J. Chan Marino | 10. Producer of “This American Life” on Public Radio |
| K. August Wilson | 11. Music and art festival which began in 2002 |
| L. Gestapo | 12. American hip-hop group from New York City |
| M. Saddam Hussein | 13. Concert venue in midtown Manhattan |
| N. Bonnie and Clyde | 14. American comedian known to be outspoken |
| O. DJ Yella | 15. American rapper from Detroit film <i>8 Mile</i> |
| P. Chian-Kai- <i>shrek</i> | 16. For-profit educational institution |
| Q. Mickey Rooney | 17. Area where trade laws differ from rest of China |
| R. Erhu | 18. Prejorative term referencing mass Chinese emigration to the affluent community of San Marino, California |

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

QUOTABLE MOMENTS

Choose one of the following quotes from *Tiger Style!* Write an essay analyzing the quote's meaning. Consider:

- Which character said it?
- Does the character mean it literally or is there an unspoken subtext?
- What does this statement reveal about the character's way of looking at the world?
- How do the character's actions support or contradict the quote?
- Do other characters seem to agree or disagree?
- How does the quote contribute to the forward progression of the scene and of the plot as a whole?

It's like: just because you know my race doesn't mean you know me. It doesn't mean you get to project your racial assumptions ...

But you can't leave me after I sunk so much time into you. I'm on a highly detailed timetable for how I want to live out my life and I have no time for personal hiccups.

Yelling at our parents is the only way we can shed our old hang-ups and move on to be full-grown adults. This is what everyone else does!

Well it sounds like you didn't live up to your own expectations. So why would I yell?

A childhood of flashcards and workbooks and extra summer school and for WHAT? They started cheating off my tests in middle school and it pretty much hasn't stopped since. In the school system Asians are dominating but once we hit the real world all us over-achievers are nowhere.

Nah-nah-nah, don't feed me that American Dream crap. After three generations in this country I don't want the American Dream. I wanna be an American Idiot with all the irrational self-confidence and sense of entitlement such a position of privilege entails.

But isn't it paradoxical to demand our unquestioned loyalty and affection while being deliberately withholding, even as that exact same approach drove a wedge between you and your father?

This is not like the US where a foreign doctor must jump through so many hoops that they throw up their hands in frustration and go be a cabbie. We care most about the utility of worker placement – the best for the job, in the best jobs, doing their jobs best... jobs.

Sure, it may be a little smoggy, but that smog smells like progress. So put on these breathing masks and explore modern China.

Hey isn't it funny? Back home in Irvine everyone was like, "Hey, you look interesting, where are you from? No, where are you really from?" Whereas here they're like, "Hey you sound interesting, where are you from?"

But don't I deserve to find love? Is it too much to ask to both find love and love someone worth loving?

But in America you're s'posed to just complain about shit, you're not supposed to actually do something. Posturing is the American way.

...Are you saying that it's in some ways a Chinese jail that is of our own making?

This is the slow crawl of generations of progress. By the time real social change rolls around we'll be dead.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

FAMILY TREE: CHARTING SUCCESS

A family tree is a chart representing family relationships in an organized format. The “tree” can be designed left to right or up and down; you may find it easiest to place the older generations at the top of the tree, layering the younger generations below. For each individual, be sure to include birthdate and death date (if applicable), siblings, spouse, and children, as well as the highest level of education achieved and at least one occupation in their career history.

Step One: Decide how far back in your family’s history you want to document. At a minimum, include the grandparents on both sides of your family. This step may require you to complete primary research, which is new research you conduct yourself through interviewing other family members and gathering documents such as birth certificates, marriage licenses, immigration documents, etc. (ancestry.com, while requiring a user fee, does offer a free 14-day trial which might be helpful in starting the process).

Step Two: In your research, be sure to include highest level of education and all career information available. Make sure the format you use includes enough space to detail this information.

Step Three: After conducting your research and organizing your information, create your family tree using a poster board or other material large enough for display purposes.

Step Four: Share the project with your classmates, and with their help and analysis answer the questions below:

- Who in the family tree obtained the highest level of education?
- Who in the family tree secured the highest paying job?
- Do you see any trends over the generations (family size, level of education, career transitions, etc.)?
- Who are the most “successful” members of the family tree? How does a person achieve success?
- Speculate as to who are the “happiest” members of the family tree? Does happiness correlate to your definition of success? Which is more important: happiness or success? Must these two achievements always go together?



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Matching Game Answer Key

1/R, 2/Q, 3/P, 4/O, 5/N, 6/M, 7/L, 8/K, 9/A, 10/B, 11/C, 12/D, 13/E, 14/F, 15/G, 16/H, 17/I, 18/J

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2016-2017 STUDENT MATINEES

SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE SEPT. 29

TIGER STYLE! OCT. 28 & NOV. 3

A DOLL'S HOUSE JAN. 19

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG MAR. 17 & 30

THE WHO & THE WHAT APR. 13